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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2017

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: DUTCH CHOD CLARIFIES

COMMENTS ON DUTCH DEPLOYMENT

REF: 3/14/07 POLITICS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Classified By: Ambassador Roland Arnall, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (S) Dutch CHOD General Dick Berlijn clarified to Ambassador Arnall on March 15 comments he made in an interview with the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* (ref). According to Gen. Berlijn, he did not say anything new or different than the official Dutch government position regarding its two year deployment to Uruzgan. He said the article took his comments out of context, especially regarding the article's title: "Netherlands will not extend current mission in Uruzgan". He did acknowledge making comments stating that Dutch helicopter and engineering units were "stretched to the limit." But he said the article misrepresented his position, making him appear negative regarding prospects of maintaining some form of Dutch presence in Uruzgan beyond August 2008.

¶2. (S) From a purely military perspective, Berlijn envisioned two possible ways forward: "optimistically," the Dutch could remain engaged militarily in Uruzgan if another ally provided helicopter and engineering unit support. From a more negative viewpoint, Berlijn said the Dutch could retain a presence in Uruzgan to assist in some capacity, so long as such assistance was not military in nature. Berlijn emphasized that the future role of the Dutch presence in Uruzgan was ultimately a "political issue" that must be resolved between the Dutch government and parliament in coming months. He added that the Dutch military recognizes there is "still a lot of work to do" in Uruzgan, and wants to continue to work closely with the United States in Afghanistan.

ARNALL